
November 14: World Diabetes Day

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Guest bloggers Chris and Lorraine Stiehl are CIRM Patient Advocate Coordinators*:

Sunday, November 14 is World Diabetes Day. Back in 2004, we joined the team that launched Prop 71 because of the opportunity that stem cells may provide for diabetes. We are now involved with CIRM as Advocacy Coordinators, working with all of you across the state to help bring the exciting research made possible by CIRM to the patient advocacy community. In our short time in this role, we have met many passionate and dedicated stem cell advocates who are working hard to find better treatments and cures for dozens of diseases.

In honor of World Diabetes Day, we thought we'd make diabetes the subject of our first blog posting. As you know, diabetes is a growing epidemic in California and across the globe. CIRM has funded numerous research projects involving diabetes including a Disease Team Research Award granted to UCSF and ViaCyte (you can see a complete list of diabetes awards funded by CIRM). Not only are these researchers seeking to create an unlimited supply of insulin-producing beta cells from stem cells, they are exploring ways to protect these cells from attack by the patient's own immune system. Now that these researchers have experienced success in animal models, they are excited about moving their research into pre-clinical and clinical application â thanks to CIRM funding. This goal is in sight.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that there are over 24 million Americans who are living with diabetes. Approximately 3 million of these individuals have type 1 diabetes, the most severe form of this disease. Voluntary health organizations such as the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), a major funder of Prop 71, and the American Diabetes Association (ADA), continue to promote stem cell research and partner closely with organizations such as CIRM.

In addition to supporting research, JDRF and ADA work hard to create a platform for the diabetes community to organize itself, so advocates may more effectively advance research at both the state and federal levels of government. Websites such as www.t1diabetes.org and www.juvenation.org provide opportunities for those with diabetes to build relationships with one another and find daily support. Translating the deeper connections made possible through social media into offline relationships is also critical. That is why JDRF is hosting Type 1 Talk on World Diabetes Day, November 14. Additionally, ADA is actively promoting World Diabetes Day and their activities may be found on their website.

As Patient Advocate Coordinators for CIRM, we hope to educate, excite and empower advocates involved in all diseases that demand a cell-based solution such as those found in stem cell research. We look forward to working with all of you in the coming months And if you want to keep up with stem cell research more broadly become a fan of CIRM on FaceBook.

Lorraine Stiehl also serves as the National Chair of Grassroots Advocacy for JDRF and was their Volunteer of the Year for 2010. She will be one of the speakers on the Type 1 Talk webcast.

** This entry was updated 11/16 to reflect the proper title for Chris and Lorraine Stiehl: "CIRM Patient Advocate Coordinators"*

Tags: Diabetes, stiehl